



## Educating Librarians For the Work of Library Adult Education

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PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE UNITED STATES in the last thirty years have created the field of library adult education. Acknowledging the perennial problems of definition, the profession has, nevertheless, achieved some agreement on the scope of this field: library services that promote or provide a continuing cumulative educational experience for adults, whether through readers' advisory service to individuals or to groups, sequential group programs of forum or discussion, or active cooperation with community group programs or community wide programs in which library materials, skills, or insights appropriately make a contribution. Further, a variety of supporting areas of library activity have been closely related to these library services; for example, building library collections of materials, studying the community, and publicity and promotion. This, then, is the scope of library service for which librarians must be prepared with philosophy, background information, and skills.<sup>1</sup>

Preparation of librarians for the work of library adult education is referred to in terms both of "training" and of "education." The distinction which E. J. Reece<sup>2</sup> made between the two may serve as a useful beginning of analysis: training is appropriate for induction into the methods and processes of tasks that are routinized or sufficiently repetitive to call for little exercise of discretion. While education is appropriate for induction into areas of activity requiring exercise of judgment and initiative, and appreciation of the way the task is performed to the goals in view, analysis of problems, development of adaptations, and application of principles within a human situation. It is obvious, within this framework, that library adult education requires education rather than training.

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Yet much of the preparation for library adult education has been conducted at the training level: in-service training for book talks to adults, and discussion leadership training, are typical of the terminology. Often such preparation has been too exclusively on the training level, the rule of thumb, the set pattern of a service that in potential has wider implications than the training situation permits of exploration. Because library adult education as a field has been developed from practice in the concrete library situation, it is inevitable that training has been the first approach. As a new service evolved, its pattern was more easily taught than its principles, which have emerged slowly. As the body of principles has developed, however, they have appeared first in training situations, to receive generalized form only later. As an example, the American Library Association projects in discussion programs and community study, the American Heritage Project and the Library-Community Project, both have produced a body of principles out of an analytic approach to training for a concrete and particular service.<sup>3</sup> Thirty years of such experimentation and analysis by public librarians have brought the library profession to a place where it can begin to think in terms of education for the work of library adult education.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to achievement of a clarified scope and a growing body of principles for the field of library adult education, preparation of librarians for this work profits from more frequent cosponsorship of such programs of education by library schools, professional associations, state library agencies, and public libraries. The question of the respective role of each of these institutions or agencies has been considered from the point of view of the agencies able to reach on-the-job librarians with the needed training, for example, the state library agencies and the professional associations,<sup>5</sup> and from the point of view of the "best" learning situation for each varied aspect of the field, whether philosophy, knowledge, or skill.<sup>6</sup>

There is general agreement that initial orientation to library adult education comes in library schools, whose formal course work may well be supplemented by field work, internships, work-study programs, and subject preparation in related fields such as sociology, psychology, and education.<sup>7</sup> As C. W. Stone phrased it: "Education for librarianship does not end in the classroom. . . . In the United States, one hopes simply that a library school will provide an intensive program of sound professional orientation and familiarization with basic principles and techniques, and some stimulus toward improvement of practice

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in the field.”<sup>8</sup> Beyond this initial education, programs of in-service training make an important contribution in developing the library adult education skills, with the larger public library employing the recent graduates able to “transform its fledgling librarians into expert book selectors, readers’ advisers, and group leaders.”<sup>9</sup> Increasingly professional associations and state library agencies are working co-operatively with library schools and other university divisions to develop workshops and institutes for librarians of varied levels of experience and in varied phases of library adult education.

A useful distinction in the post-graduate learning was developed in 1954, at the Allerton Park Conference on *Training Needs of Librarians Doing Adult Education Work*, a distinction between formal and incidental preparation for library adult education. On-the-job training, workshops, institutes, conferences, university and library school courses, exchange and study grant programs, and consultant advice are all made available as part of a planned program of formal advanced education; but equally important for advanced learning are the on-the-job experience, the actual participation in adult education activities, the opportunities provided by staff self-study surveys and professional activities, as well as professional reading, travel, and observation.<sup>10</sup> These latter incidental learning situations can be quite fruitful sources of post-graduate learning and are being increasingly used as methods by libraries and associations with the major objective of education for library adult education.

Professional consensus on the program of education for library adult education is a recent achievement. In 1937, Miriam D. Tompkins<sup>11</sup> pointed out that the profession did not understand precisely what constituted a library adult education, and that there was some professional uncertainty about the fundamental objectives of library service that provide the basis for the library as an agency of adult education. Miss Tompkins’ analysis in this paper of the understandings and skills needed by library adult educators provided a major step toward clarification in this field. She proposed that the first-year library school curriculum be an orientation provided through such basic courses as book selection, reference, administration with stress on readers’ interests, needs, and abilities, and on the library objective of service to readers. In 1937, she commented, the state of knowledge in library adult education was inadequate for extended formal study, and education at the advanced level might better come through experience in meeting the actual situation on the job. The need for

more knowledge in the field of library adult education could then be met by carefully analyzed experience developed in the practical situation.

That professional uncertainty existed about the fundamental objectives of library services as they relate to adult education is amply documented in studies in library education for the following twenty years. J. L. Wheeler<sup>12</sup> presented his 1946 discussion of library adult education under the caption "Confusion,"<sup>13</sup> from which no great clarification emerged. His survey of problems in education for librarianship dismissed the area of library adult education as expensive, as extras which could not be justified until the primary library purposes had been fully met, and as finding no proper place in the library school curriculum which "is already too tight; something has to give way."<sup>14</sup> Two years later a symposium presented at the University of Chicago included a paper on "Education for Public Librarianship" by Ralph Munn<sup>15</sup> with a discussion of this paper by Richard Sealock.<sup>16</sup> Munn noted that "progressive public libraries are becoming more active participants in the life of their communities," and identified work with community organizations and the development of educational group programs which had been successfully developed. He refrained from approving these aspects of public library programs, identified them as fringe activities related to public relations, judged that they affected very little the over-all character of public library service, and concluded that "our public librarians must be educated accordingly." Sealock's answer pointed out the change in public librarianship's goals as stated in the *National Plan for Public Libraries* and the Public Library Inquiry with their stress on educational activities of a broad nature. Sealock summarized: "If there is any despair in my mind now in regard to the effectiveness of the public library it lies in our present failure to meet the challenge of community-wide adult education. Surely suitable techniques for community cooperation can be developed by libraries with the aid of library schools."<sup>17</sup>

As recently as the summer of 1954, another University of Chicago workshop on education for librarianship<sup>18</sup> displayed some professional uncertainty about fundamental library objectives in relation to library adult education. In seeking to define the core curriculum, that content of librarianship which must be mastered by everyone, the workshop participants were involved in heated debate over a recommendation that readers' advisory service be put on a par with reference service and included in the core curriculum. The upshot of the argument was

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omission of thorough study of readers' advisory service from the core, although it was seen as a service which all public librarians should be prepared to provide.

The first evidence of a professional consensus might be said to have appeared in the conference on Training Needs held at Allerton Park four months later, November 14-16, 1954, at which education for library adult education was the topic. Although there was a tendency to avoid identifying a core in which all librarians were to be proficient, the ability to select and use books and other materials for individuals and groups was seen to provide basic course content for all librarians.<sup>19</sup> Lester Asheim as editor felt he discerned from the total conference a consensus that "an introduction to the library's responsibility for adult education be made a part of the general basic work of all library school students whatever their area of interest. Adult education work is seen as part of the normal responsibility of the library which, like cataloging, reference work, book selection, etc., should be understood by all librarians even though their particular specialization may not require them to undertake it."<sup>20</sup> Although the group representing the profession was not as diverse as that attending the summer workshop in 1954, still consensus in this group was achieved within a range of diverse opinion. Certainly a direction can be seen in this growth toward agreement in the profession, providing a reasonable basis for the development of educational programs in this field.

The demands of public libraries for librarians competent in library adult education have by no means waited upon the development of a professional opinion. Following the 1937 Tompkins paper, five studies appeared to provide a measure of the professional need and achievement. Sigrid A. Edge<sup>21</sup> surveyed opinion among public librarians and library school faculty on the aspects of library adult education which have significance and on the library school preparation needed to equip librarians with knowledge and skill in the area. Comments from thirty-eight libraries and twenty-five library schools reflected unanimity in seeing reading guidance as essential in the library school curriculum, while there was a reluctance to accept as essential leadership in working with groups. Recommendations stressed carefully integrated programs of training in the library school, with the educational function of the library inherent in every phase of library work; specialized course work for those qualified to enter library adult education work; a continuous program of in-service

training for librarians on the job. Alice I. Bryan's survey<sup>22</sup> of public librarians' evaluation of their library school education in terms of meeting their professional needs disclosed that three to five times as many public librarians felt there had been too little emphasis, rather than too much emphasis, on such subject areas as reading interests of adults, psychology of the reader, reader guidance, sociology of reading, public relations and publicity.<sup>23</sup>

The Smith survey<sup>24</sup> measured the librarians' evaluation of knowledge and skills necessary to adult education work. Average or above-average knowledge in subject fields was regarded as sufficient, while a level of expertness was seen as necessary in such adult education skills as book talks, reading guidance, discussion group leadership, selection and use of materials with groups, and in such subject fields as readers and readers' problems, public relations, human relations, and community organization. "On the whole it would seem they felt that the responsibility for such education and training rested with the library school, that in-service training could meet only the most urgent needs, and was possible among a very limited number of libraries."<sup>25</sup> Therefore in addition to formal courses, librarians looked to institutes and workshops as well as to in-service training to provide the needed education. Helen L. Smith points out that this is the judgment of librarians most of whom had learned to do library adult education on the job, through conference institutes or through trial and error. In the light of this, it is significant that over a third of the librarians felt that a library staff had need for more training for adult education. In her conclusions to this study, Mrs. Smith states: "The problem of personnel and training was one of greatest concern among those people interviewed and those taking part in the conference discussion groups. . . . The question of what training to give these people, and how and when and where, should concern the profession for some time to come."<sup>26</sup>

Following the Smith survey, Stone chaired a committee of the Adult Services Section, Public Libraries Division of the American Library Association that undertook the kind of study proposed by Mrs. Smith. This committee's report analyzed educational opportunities in the period 1952 to 1954, discovering that only two of thirty-one accredited library schools were offering specialized courses in areas of library adult education, that state library agencies provided more workshop and institute opportunities than did library schools, and that state association institutes and public library in-service training programs



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were sparse in this field. Interpretation of the values of the short course, institute, or workshop stressed its ability to penetrate deeply into a subject, to produce desirable changes in attitudes as well as developing knowledge and skill competency, with special appropriateness for experienced librarians with a broad professional orientation. The bibliography of published and unpublished materials descriptive of programs of in-service training, workshops, and institutes is valuable as a listing of primary source material. Recommendations arising from this study stress the profession's responsibility for expanding opportunities for education for library adult education. The role of the state library agency, working with the state professional association, is seen as that of stimulation and coordination of continuing programs of in-service training through institutes. Public libraries' contribution through establishment of internships is emphasized. The recommendation that the professional association provide consultants and training services to state library associations and other groups has since been developed by the American Library Association's Library-Community Project. This report, although never formally published, has exercised considerable influence, along with the Smith report, in the development of education in library adult education.

Finally, a series of five case studies of public library programs of adult education prepared by Eleanor Phinney<sup>27</sup> to ascertain the elements that make for a successful program of library adult education found that no specialized training in methods of library adult education characterized the public librarians who successfully guided these programs.<sup>28</sup> Each chief librarian has had sound and thorough professional training along conventional lines and a variety of experience. The picture is that of the jack-of-all-trades librarian as identified in the Smith survey, with a versatility that has come to be expected of the librarian in a small or medium-sized library. Although the programs in these five libraries included reading promotion, work with community groups, book discussion leadership, utilization of mass media to interpret the library to the community, the minimum of specialized training was achieved at the moment the skills were specifically needed, were secured in relation to a special project, and were available from professional associations (the A.L.A. American Heritage Project discussion leadership training and program planning counseling), from the state library extension agency (consultant help in Georgia, Maryland, Wisconsin), and from university extension (Wisconsin). In identifying the foremost quality which the librarians

responsible for successful adult education programs share, Miss Phinney notes "the sense of purpose . . . a basic educational policy, growing out of a strong personal conviction as to the role of the library in community adult education."<sup>29</sup> This confirms the priority which Miss Tompkins and Miss Edge assigned to clarity of library objectives. Nevertheless, beyond this important and fundamental truth, the Phinney case studies show that there was specialized training available or consultant service at hand for each library as it stepped into a new area of library adult education.

In summary, these five studies uniformly reflect the lack of sufficient preparation for library adult education in the first-year library school curriculum, and the development of workshops, institutes, short courses, and programs of consultant advice to carry beyond the basic professional orientation of this first-year education.

The significance of the 1954 Allerton Park Conference on Training Needs lies in its membership as well as its analysis and conclusions. As a first conference of this type, called by the American Library Association and supported by a grant from the Fund for Adult Education, this conference drew upon representatives from library schools, university departments of adult education, public and college libraries, and state library agencies. In this context thought was cast into new molds, and library adult education was viewed in a wide perspective.

In addition to the very substantial contributions in definition, and analysis of educational needs and learning situations already referred to, the Allerton Park Conference made a series of specific recommendations for action by library schools, practicing librarians, and the profession as a whole. Over a period of more than two years, reports<sup>30, 31</sup> and a conference on these recommendations have been developed, offering a detailed study of the effectiveness of the original 1954 conference in stimulating needed developments in the preparation of librarians for library adult education. Outstanding aspects of development related to the conference recommendations have been identified: library schools have increasingly integrated background knowledge and philosophy of library adult education in basic courses and have developed at both the first year and second year levels elective courses in library adult education; library schools have increasingly used the resources of other university divisions to enrich the course work in this field; state and regional library associations have given place on conference programs to meetings on library



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adult education topics, and fourteen associations reported in 1956 the existence of adult education committees; library associations have developed joint programs with library schools and with state library agencies, and have involved library trustees in orientation to library adult education; local "little Allerton conferences" have been held as a follow-up in a few regions.

In attempting to implement the recommendations of the Allerton Park Conference, librarians have become aware that the job of orientation of the professional still is a primary need, and conference, short-term workshop, and institute have served a very important function in accomplishing this. The pattern of such conferences and workshops has changed from the presentation of papers which is traditional with the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago.<sup>32, 33</sup> Methods used in the current pattern of workshop and conference, designed to provide orientation to values and library objectives as well as to a survey of knowledge, have been developed from the field of adult education itself. A brief but excellent view of the current pattern is presented by Ruth Warncke, based on the approach of the American Library Association's Library-Community Project.<sup>34</sup> This Project has been responsible for providing consultant aid and personnel for more than fifty library adult education workshops and conference programs that have been offered since the Allerton Park Conference.<sup>35-39</sup> Most of these have been sponsored or cosponsored by state library agencies and state library associations. And state library agencies have found further resources in state adult education associations<sup>40</sup> and within the practicing profession of librarianship.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the best documented institute on library adult education is the Wisconsin Free Library Commission's institute on *Informal Education through Libraries*.<sup>42</sup> A detailed analysis of the structure of the institute and the way it worked points up a typical mixture of institute and workshop techniques which have proven their value in education for library adult education: a rich roster of outstanding speakers, drawn from both library and nonlibrary fields, supplemented by problem discussion and project-oriented small group activity. Participants themselves formed panels for presentation of topics and gave significant direction to the thinking of the two-week institute. Creative group planning by staff and participants during the conference assured that the structure of the conference was translated into a successfully functioning institute. Skillful evaluation, planned for in advance and carried out during the institute and two months

later, permitted measurement of changes in orientation to library adult education objectives and methods, and measurement of change in library programs following the institute. The significant development in both aspects lends a validity to methods and resources used during the institute. The printed report in itself has become a resource for orientation of librarians to this field.

Increasingly workshops and institutes developed by library schools and university departments for short-term study in library adult education have been cosponsored by state library associations and agencies. Stone sees this as a joint responsibility, and Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan<sup>43</sup> have been developing summer workshops and seminars in this pattern.

The report of the Allerton Park Conference stressed the importance of enriching the philosophy and practice of library adult education through using the educational resources of related professional associations and university departments of education, sociology, and psychology.<sup>44</sup> State library agencies are only beginning to utilize these resources. Mississippi's workshop in 1956 led the way for state agency utilization of adult education association resources. M. S. Knowles,<sup>45</sup> in discussing the library's role in adult education, underscored the necessity for librarians to talk constantly with other adult educators and specialists to become aware of new insights and skills which are currently being identified and developed. Discussion leadership training has for the last twelve years been one area in which librarians have looked frequently to outside experts for assistance; and in the area of objectives and long-range program development the instance of the 1948 Pre-Conference Workshop for Librarians and Rural Sociologists is outstanding for its influence and its uniqueness.<sup>46</sup> This enrichment of library experience through contact with other related fields has also been carried on at the level of the individual librarian. Dorothy Bendix<sup>47</sup> reported her analysis of the contribution of group dynamics as presented at the National Training Laboratory in Group Development at Bethel. New insights derived from the thinking of this field brought a sophistication to her analysis of the problems of library discussion programs; factors in the group situation were more carefully defined and interpreted but the applications to library adult education would have to be worked out within the library profession. Education of experienced leaders in library adult education can well proceed on this level, to the benefit of both the individual and the profession.

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The role of the library school in providing education for library adult education has centered on integration of orientation and philosophy, with the development of an elective course here and there, and on cooperation with other agencies and associations in post-graduate short-term workshops and institutes. The library school has, perhaps, a unique responsibility: that of introducing change. As the director of a library school wrote: "we cannot teach entirely in terms of contemporary library conditions."<sup>48</sup> Recently L. A. Martin commented more fully: "Formal education at all levels has a dual responsibility, to prepare graduates qualified to deal with present conditions and at the same time qualified to meet future changes. . . . It is not only a matter of accepting and adjusting to change . . . it is equally a matter of anticipating and controlling change."<sup>49</sup> Present analysis of library school curricula would seem to indicate that change in the structure of the curriculum in relation to library adult education is conservative. Reading guidance or advisory service remains the most frequently offered course in library adult education. But change in philosophy and commitment to educational objectives for the public library may come regardless of curriculum structure, and will be engendered not only by the faculty specialist in library adult education, but by the composite force of the total faculty view of library objectives. This builds in a conservative quality in the library school. Elective library adult education courses, workshops, and institutes, will provide the more direct expression of new insights, new knowledge, new methods. Weighed in the context of the total field of librarianship, as they inevitably are in the library school, these developments from related disciplines of sociology, psychology, education, and from the field of practicing librarianship may achieve a level of integration into the total view of librarianship which will make them effective ingredients in the development of library adult education.

While the unique role of the library school may change through education, the public library's unique contribution may lie in innovation, the predecessor to change. The imaginative devising of services to meet the educational needs of adults provides new insights and new methods which, when tested and analyzed, may offer new knowledge. It is by innovation that the field of library adult education has developed in the past generation. The public library's major contribution to the preparation of librarians for library adult education will be a post-graduate study of such innovations. These innovations may com-

pare with the readers' advisory service as developed in The New York Public Library by Jennie M. Flexner, or with the reader interest arrangement of books for branch libraries as developed in the Detroit Public Library under R. A. Ulveling and Ruth Rutzen, or with the pattern of cosponsored community institutes as fostered at the Enoch Pratt Free Library by Marion E. Hawes. Internships in such situations stimulate learning in its most vital form, under the impetus of development and change when principles emerge from practice.

Internships may be set up as a formal program, such as that made possible by the Fund for Adult Education's Leadership Grants available to librarians. Rebecca J. Camp's report<sup>50</sup> on her experience in the study of discussion techniques emphasizes the sense of freedom to experiment which she found in libraries she visited under an F.A.E. Leadership Grant. The lack of a continuing program of public library internship for adult education was noted in the Allerton Park report, with the recommendation that public libraries explore every possibility for establishing field work and internship situations.<sup>51</sup> And currently the Adult Services Division of the American Library Association has placed high on its list of priorities the exploration of feasible approaches to a program of internship "in adult education and/or adult services."<sup>52</sup>

A less formal program of internship may be said to exist in those public libraries offering a well-developed program of in-service training to its staff. Enoch Pratt Free Library, for example, not only encourages its staff to attend workshops offered outside the library and to report on them<sup>53</sup> but has regularly conducted its annual one-day institute for all its staff, with the concerns of library adult education frequently the focus.<sup>54, 55</sup> Staff orientation to the particular services of The New York Public Library and training in the skills required in performing these services are presented by Leona Durkes as an integral part of the library's program of adult services.<sup>56</sup> This approach is matched by other large public libraries throughout the country.

The dilemma of the small public library lies in its equal need for in-service training but the inaccessibility of expertness to provide it. One widely publicized solution has been developed by the staff of Community Services in Adult Education of Indiana and Purdue Universities. R. M. Smith worked with the library staffs of five small-town libraries in northeast Indiana in a program of cooperative in-service training which became known as The Kendallville Project.<sup>57</sup> Clarification of adult education goals in terms of library goals was the first

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step, during which discussion skills were developed; then the staff members developed program planning institutes for each community as an exercise in library adult education; finally a workshop-clinic for evaluation concluded the program that was truly in-service training since it took place in the local community and was related to the local library's program. Generalizing from this experience Smith points out that the very principles of adult education seem to demand that libraries accept in-service training as a permanent dimension of library practice.<sup>58</sup>

An extremely useful summary of purposes, methods, content, and resources for in-service training for library adult education was prepared by Miss Durkes<sup>59</sup> for a one-week institute at Rutgers Graduate School of Library Service. Of particular importance is the delineation of levels on which in-service training is needed: orientation for the new staff member; training in various skills and techniques of services at whatever point they are needed; and at the administrative level, training in the planning, promotion, and carrying out of adult education activities. An imaginative and well interpreted list of methods invites experimentation.

Since the Allerton Park Conference, the role of the American Library Association in promoting preparation of librarians for library adult education has continued its many facets: publication of reports on the conference itself and its follow-up; development of the Library-Community Project to meet the educational needs of librarians through providing consultant help generously, through establishment of intensive training programs in pilot project areas, through enriching the national, regional, and state association conference programs;<sup>60</sup> through the stimulation by the Adult Services Division of establishment of state association committees on adult education which carry locally the responsibility for conference program and statewide projects;<sup>62</sup> and finally for the continuous re-enforcement of the role of the state library agency as the channel through which the benefits of the national association's resources in library adult education are to be made available to libraries and library agencies within each state.<sup>61</sup> The determining influence of the leadership of the American Library Association on the library adult education services of the country cannot be doubted, and its influence both direct and indirect on the methods, content, and extent of preparation of librarians to perform these services is indisputable.

These, then, are the conditions and trends in educating librarians

for work in library adult education. What shall we choose from all of this for special encouragement and development? There are two aspects of education that need simultaneous growth. First, the education of the practitioner must enable him to perform well the already established library adult education services, and to increasingly clarify his purposes and fashion methods to achieve his new objectives. A sustained program of in-service training conducted by public libraries themselves singly or in cooperation, and assisted by the varied resources of the region, all will be needed to carry the librarian from his basic orientation of a first year of library school study to a competence on the job.

Second, the education of the competent practitioner must assist him in becoming the innovator who will push into new frontiers of knowledge. For this, research must become a commonplace in library adult education, with library schools working closely with innovating libraries; internships in library adult education should be developed under the guidance of a formal program of advanced study so that the most useful experiences may be developed for the student and so that sound analysis of the experience may enrich the profession as well; and extensive study of the results of research in related fields must be made so that library adult education may profit by knowledge and concepts that have a pertinence for this field.

The demands of library adult education upon the understanding and skills of the practicing librarian are beginning to demonstrate the importance of continuous education in the profession. Informal post-graduate education will increasingly be supplemented by formal advanced study on a second year level within the university-based library school. This is one mark of the increasing professionalism of public library adult services.

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